

March 21, 2000 Regional Trails Forum Meeting Summary

April 5, 2000

Introduction

On March 21, 2000 the second Regional Trails Forum was held to obtain feedback for the Regional Off-Street System Plan (ROSS). Thirty-five persons attended the meeting, which was hosted by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), and featured presentations by MAG and the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department. The presentations made by the agencies were followed with hearty discussion of visions for off-street travel in the region, potential corridor users, and implementation. Participants were given opportunity to voice their concerns, and members of the consultant team facilitated the discussion and documented these concerns for incorporation into the ROSS plan.

The Regional Trails Forum was originally initiated as a way to obtain input on the ROSS plan. The Forum increased in scope to incorporate planning efforts of other agencies addressing the issues of pathway development, trails, open space and transportation. With increased interest among several government agencies, private sector organizations, elected officials and members of the public in these issues, the creation of the Regional Trails Forum became a way to encourage cooperation among numerous players. Providing a forum for discussion and study of regional problems is a key role of MAG. By cooperating and pooling common resources, citizens can get the utmost dollar for every dollar spent on governmental operations.

Overview of Presentations

The meeting began with an introduction from MAG staff to explain the purpose of the Regional Trails Forum. The Forum serves to:

- Provide input to the ROSS plan;
- Encourage connectivity of trails between jurisdictional boundaries; and
- Apprise cities, business interests, community groups and citizens of trail development issues and planning activities of public agencies.

The meeting continued with a presentation by the consultant team, and an opportunity for participant response to the draft vision statement, goals and objectives. A brief summary of the presentation is provided below.

Draft Vision

Residents of the MAG region have safe, convenient access to an attractive, multi-use, non-motorized transportation system for local trips to work, school, shopping and leisure activities.

Draft Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives address five main themes based upon the issues and opportunities in developing a viable ROSS plan. These five themes include safety, accessibility, connectivity, user-friendly and implementation.

Safety Goal

Develop a system of pathways and trails that are safe for a variety of users.

Safety Objectives

- Use appropriate design tools for multi-purpose corridors to meet non-motorized transportation needs without detracting from the original purpose of the corridor.
- Encourage the use of crime prevention through environmental design techniques to address the issue of personal safety.

Accessibility Goal

Provide safe, convenient access which is highly visible.

Accessibility Objectives

- Remove or alleviate barriers to non-motorized travel through the use of design techniques.
- Encourage land use patterns which place origin and destination points within reasonable walking and bicycling distance of one another.
- Design an off-street pathway system which acknowledges and accounts for the needs of existing and potential users.
- Design an off-street pathway system that maximizes access points.

Connectivity Goal

Make appropriate connections between origins and destinations by linking with existing transportation systems.

Connectivity Objectives

- Connect origins and destinations with facilities to encourage non-motorized travel.
- Develop design tools to minimize barriers while riding a bike or walking along pathways.
- Connect paths to arterials and collectors safely and effectively.
- Link the off-street non-motorized transportation system with the on-street system to optimize opportunities for travel by bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Identify obvious gaps in the existing system of off-street pathways and develop methods to address these gaps from a user's perspective.
- Design the off-street system to supplement the on-street system for travel by bicyclists and pedestrians.

User-Friendly Goal

Develop a system of pathways that considers the needs of users and potential users (is “user-friendly”).

User-Friendly Objectives

- Design attractive and appropriate facilities based upon user needs, surrounding land uses and community character.
- Provide an appropriate level of amenities for non-motorized users to encourage bicycling and walking and to meet user needs, including drinking fountains, rest areas and signage.
- Minimize conflicts between users by employing appropriate design techniques.
- Maintain pathways to keep them clear of debris.

Implementation Goal

Achieve a truly regional system of off-street pathways by assisting MAG member agencies in developing portions of the off-street system that fall under their jurisdiction.

Implementation Objectives

- ▶ Create partnerships with private and public sector organizations having linear rights-of way to encourage the development of non-motorized transportation facilities that will meet the needs of the community without infringing on the original purpose of the right-of-way.
- ▶ Encourage funding of projects which provide off-street travel opportunities in areas where expansion or retrofit of on-street facilities is cost prohibitive.
- ▶ Work to resolve issues associated with developing pathways and trail systems in corridors and rights-of-way, such as operations and maintenance.
- ▶ Develop flexible performance standards to deal with a variety of circumstances that may be encountered when developing in rights-of way with size constraints or policy constraints.
- ▶ Develop a model ordinance requiring developers of properties adjacent or in close proximity to the regional off-street system to pay the cost of constructing pathways.
- ▶ Consider and identify creative ways and approaches to implementing the system, such as shared use agreements, model ordinances and shared funding opportunities.
- ▶ Promote the system as a viable alternative to driving.

Project Approach

The MAG Region is quite large. The goal is to find opportunities to link origins and destinations. Destinations include employment, parks, colleges and universities. Origins can be identified by mapping residential density. Opportunities include waterways and desert greenbelts, canals, rail lines, and Flood Control District rights-of-way.

Next Steps

After today's meeting, the goals and objectives will be revised based upon participant comments. Potential corridors for pathways will be identified and draft evaluation criteria will be developed to evaluate corridors.

Participant Comments

The following is a summary of the participant comments from the Forum. Many of these comments address issues, who the paths are designed for and implementation of the plan. In listing the comments below, efforts have been made to state participant's ideas as voiced at the Forum.

- Why should horsemen be involved in the development of this plan if the focus is on bicycling and pedestrians? (MAG staff response: While the funding source of the ROSS plan limits planning specifically for equestrian facilities, it is important to know where existing and planned equestrian facilities are located to identify potential conflicts between users, and to allow accommodation of existing uses).
- Getting to and from golf course via golf cart in Sun City is a need. Can these facilities be used for golf carts? (MAG Staff response: The ROSS plan is focused on non-motorized transportation, which means that these facilities, assuming they would be constructed with federal transportation funding, will not accommodate golf carts. However, communities wishing to build facilities for golf cart transportation can do so with funding other than federal transportation funding).
- Developers should pay for portions of pathways.
- Paths should be included in developing areas to limit the cost of retrofitting.
- Will this plan change spending priorities to help provide more federal transportation funding for non-motorized transportation?
- Paved and unpaved paths should be shown separately on the map.
- The map should be produced in data layers to allow building on the map for the needs of individual cities.
- Need to differentiate between the definitions of “path” and “trail.” Trails are usually unpaved while paths are usually paved.
- Existing trails should be mapped as paved or unpaved. What will the connections be between the trails — paved or unpaved?
- Use a soft surface next to hard paved surfaces to accommodate a wider range of user groups.
- This plan needs to include the perspective of street engineers as well as recreational professionals.

- This plan can be used to leverage funding. There is substantial funding available through TEA-21 for non-motorized transportation.
- We need to work as a region to develop funding priorities. That way, we can have regional priorities and maximize funding to the entire region rather than competing as separate cities or agencies.

Any comments are welcomed and can be e-mailed to ross@rbf.com

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